



## The Lab Notebook

### EDISON DAY is Saturday, June 7

**Come join us for Edison Day 2014.** We'll be bigger than ever this year, joining the town of West Orange in marking New Jersey's 350th anniversary. Main Street will host a street fair, and the annual town Picnic will take place on the grass behind Vault 12 along with stage events from 11am to 7pm. The Hall of Fame Mobile Museum will also be here.

Wax cylinder recording sessions will feature Bob DeVos, jazz guitarist, Jenny and the Felines, a rock trio, Demolition String Band, performers of American roots music, and Larry Fast, synthesizer. Fast has worked, over the decades, with Peter Gabriel, Hall & Oates, and Barbra Streisand. He is also, incidentally, a board member of the Friends of Thomas Edison National Historical Park.

The staff of Historic Speedwell will bring some telegraph equipment to explore one of Edison's earliest technological successes. The American Chemical Society will sponsor posters and demon-

strations presented by young scientists and inventors from area high schools highlighting the role of chemistry in Edison's inventions. The New Jersey Electric Auto Association show off its cars.

Archivists Lenny DeGraaf and Ed Wirth will host an open house with historic photos of the West Orange area. Town historian Joe Fagan will join them to chat with visitors.

Glenmont will be open for tours; the Glenmont garage will have a mini-Model T just right for young motorists. Staff will offer tours of the geothermal heating system. Other kid-friendly events include the Junior Ranger program and demonstrations of the Park Ranger patrol car and its equipment.

Also on hand will be the Friends of Thomas Edison National Historical Park (TENHP), the Millburn High School Edison Club, the Rutgers Extension Master Gardeners of Essex County, and the Edison Innovation Foundation. **More on EDISON DAY on page 4.**



#### A Last Look at a Rough Winter

The Park dug out from an almost constant series of snowstorms that hit the northeast from December through February. We were closed to the public often during the period. The Maintenance staff was on duty, however, busy plowing, shoveling, salting, and repairing. Thanks to Charly Magale, Walter Baginski, Arnold Griffin, and Ricky Suarez. The Protection staff was here too, patrolling, checking, and monitoring contractors. Thanks to Alex Whitten, Tom Adam, Eddie Grimes, and Michael Hanna. We're grateful to them all for their efforts during a truly nasty winter.



## Message from the Superintendent

Well the brutal winter of 2013-14 is over, I hope. Our entire staff did a great job this winter dealing with the snow and ice. I would especially like to recognize our small but dedicated maintenance crew who did yeoman's work plowing, blowing and shoveling us out after every major snow event. The Rangers also deserve recognition for pitching in and showing what Edison teamwork really means. Thank you!

Despite the weather the past few months have been busy with great news, programs, planning and activities. Here are a few of the highlights:

We are honored to have been selected by the American Chemical Society as a National Historic Chemical Landmark along with the Edison-Ford Site in Florida and Greenfield Village in Michigan. We look forward to the plaque presentation ceremony on June 6 which will kick off an expanded Edison Day on Saturday June 7, complete with a street fair on Main Street and the West Orange Town Picnic on the grounds of the park.

On March 26 several staff members and partners traveled to the Mark Twain House in Hartford, CT to hear our own Lenny DeGraaf and Bernie Carlson, biographer of Nikola Tesla discuss their respective books on the work and relationship between Edison and Tesla. It was a packed house and their joint program was both entertaining and educational.

On a personal note, my family and I thoroughly enjoyed participating in the West Orange St. Patrick's Day Parade riding in Edison's Model T. Despite the cold, driver Jerry Fabris did a skillful job shifting gears in the slow moving parade (and keeping the vehicle from stalling!). We were honored to represent the National Park Service and Thomas Edison National Historical Park.

As the days get longer and warmer we are pleased to see more and more visitors coming to their National Park. Our popular Year of Innovation series continues in May celebrating Thomas Edison's role in World War I. I encourage you to come out for the 1<sup>st</sup> Friday, 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday programs! In addition, we have a special TENHP field trip planned for Saturday May 17<sup>th</sup> to the Sterling Hill Mining Museum. Park staff will be joined by Dr. Paul Israel as we explore the mines, including Edison's iron mine on Sparta Mountain. Please reach out to Chief of Cultural Resources Michelle Ortwein to reserve your spot today. See you around the park!

—Tom Ross

Thomas Edison National Historical Park was established to preserve and protect Thomas Alva Edison's West Orange Laboratory, home, and collections for the education and inspiration of people worldwide.

**Thomas Edison National Historical Park**  
211 Main Street  
West Orange, NJ 07052  
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The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of Interior

## Edison Marks Women's History Month at West Orange Public Library

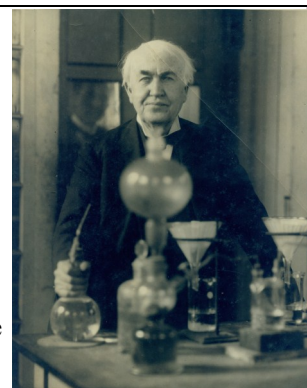
Curatorial Intern Damien Kelly, a student in the Seton Hall Museum Professions Masters program, assisted with the installation of our monthly exhibit at the West Orange Public Library. In honor of Women's History Month, the exhibit featured women inventors who devised a range of products from Tollhouse cookies to Kevlar, used to make bulletproof vests. The exhibit invites library patrons to offer their own ideas for new inventions by placing them in the adjacent basket; suggestions will later be posted at the library.



The next exhibit at the library will highlight both Edison Day and the Year of Innovation themes for May: Edison's ore milling operation and the Edison Portland cement enterprise.

## Thomas Edison, Chemist

On Friday June 6, the American Chemical Society will recognize the chemical research and developments of Thomas Edison as the Lab is designated a National Historic Chemical Landmark with the installation of a plaque here at the Park. Many of Edison's well-known inventions relied on chemistry, including the carbon filaments used in light bulbs, the nickel-iron alkaline electric storage battery, compounds used in sound recording manufacture, and research into domestic sources of rubber. The local chapter of the Society will participate in Edison Day the following day.



Additional plaques will be installed at Greenfield Village at the Henry Ford in Dearborn, on September 14, and the Edison-Ford Winter Estates in Fort Myers, on October 19.

**National Volunteer Week** (April 6-12) celebrated its 40th anniversary this year. As always, the Week is about inspiring, recognizing and encouraging people to seek out imaginative ways to engage in their communities. It's about demonstrating to the nation that by working together, we have the fortitude to meet our challenges and accomplish our goals.

We've been blessed with many devoted volunteers here at Edison. Thanks for your valuable contributions.





## A David Alling Chair at Glenmont



An example of the work of David Alling, an early nineteenth-century furniture maker, is on display at Glenmont. Conservators visiting the home were confident that a bedroom chair is the work of Alling.

He was active in Newark during the transition from hand-made home crafts to industrial machine-made products. Alling made fancy chairs, stools, standard chairs, rockers, and his signature “Windsor bamboo chair.” Success allowed him to employ a large work force to meet growing customer demand; he even purchased pre-made chair parts from New Jersey and New York to speed up production. Alling shipped his chairs to the southern United States, overseas to South America, and even invaded the New England territory of Lambert Hitchcock and his Hitchcock chair.

Since Alling did not sign his chairs with a maker’s mark, and few historic images of his products exist today, it is difficult to identify definitively an Alling chair. To complicate matters, Alling’s chairs stylistically recreated many of the features associated with Hitchcock chairs, a product of the same era. So, how did Mina Edison end up with a fancy chair attributed to David Alling? A 1921 inventory of one of the guest bedrooms is the earliest indication of its presence. Painted to imitate dark curly birch with gilt scrolling in a leaf pattern, the chair may have appealed to Mina’s growing interest in historic furniture styles. Her handwritten notes on antiques and furniture may have been made during an educational lecture series she attended at the Chautauqua Institution.

To Mina Edison, the chair may have represented a significant piece of American history, reminiscent of an era when a well-furnished home always included a delicately painted fancy chair. To Mina’s guests, her decorating choice may have suggested her knowledge of and interest in early American furniture. The chair is also a fine example of our nation’s progression from traditionally handmade furniture to factory made products sold at a variety of prices to meet the needs of every household budget. We may never know exactly what motivated Mina Edison to acquire this antique chair but we should consider ourselves lucky that the Edison estate still retains this rare hidden gem, an almost forgotten piece of furniture-making history.



An Alling chair at the Newark Museum.

## Edison vs. Tesla at Mark Twain House

Park archivist Leonard DeGraaf and University of Virginia professor W. Bernard Carlson discussed their recent books on Thomas Edison and



Three Authors: Bernie Carlson and Lenny DeGraaf join Mr. Clemens for a program at the Mark Twain House. (Only one is made of Legos.)

Nikola Tesla as part of the *Book/Mark* series of informal authors’ conversations at the Mark Twain House & Museum in Hartford, Connecticut, on March 26.

The audience of about 100 (including Park staff and partners) heard the two discuss the rivalry between the inventors and conclude that the supposed rift was mostly the invention of the press.

The Edison group received a tour of the house, which was substantially completed in 1874. Edison owned a copy of Twain’s *Autobiography* (published posthumously in 1924) which he almost certainly read, because although he made no marginal notes, he did underline and mark numerous passages.

## Friends of Edison Plan Reception at Luna Stage

illuminate your world

LUNA STAGE

Mark your calendars for the next fundraising event sponsored by the Friends of Thomas Edison National Historical Park: a special cocktail reception and matinee performance of *Marisol* by José Rivera at Luna Stage, 555 Valley Road, West Orange, the afternoon of May 4th. Check the Friends of Thomas Edison National Historical Park Facebook page for details. You can also contact them by email at [foe00@verizon.net](mailto:foe00@verizon.net) or by phone at 973-736-2916.

It’s a great time to be a member of the Friends of TENHP. Over the last 18 months the Friends have focused on nurturing and growing our member community. Members have feasted on crêpes and French wine at the Park’s presentation of “Edison and the Paris Exposition” and enjoyed a special Holiday evening at Glenmont with special private tours of the Edison home. We have brunch together at Hat City Kitchen while viewing Edison’s Great Train Robbery and Frankenstein and attended book signings for recent publications on Edison and Tesla – Leonard DeGraaf’s *Edison and the Rise of Innovation* and W. Bernard Carson’s *Tesla: Inventor of the Electrical Age*. Synthesizer expert and composer and Friends board member Larry Fast presented “Audio Long After Edison: A Legacy of Music and Film Audio and the State of Today’s Technologies,” illustrating the evolution of Edison inventions into the modern age.

All of these events were free to members and prospective members of the Friends. If you are not yet a member, please consider becoming one. Member dues are the foundation of the Friends’ mission of supporting Park activities and conservation efforts. We also look to our members to support important fundraising efforts, such as last year’s Edison Birthday Gala at the Pleasantdale Chateau.



## Electric Cars Will Be at Glenmont on Edison Day

Meet and talk to real-world owners of electric cars, get the low-down without the media hype. Meet owners of Tesla, Nissan, Ford, Toyota, Honda and more. Find out what it's really like to "drive electric." Members of the New Jersey Electric Auto Association (NJEAA) will be here on Edison Day along with their cars—the fulfillment of Edison's early twentieth-century attempt to equip automobiles with battery

power. The electric cars will all parade onto the Glenmont grounds at 11am and then parade out at 4pm. Members will be around the Glenmont Garage all day.



## Classic Car on View Edison Day



A classic car once purchased by Rudolph Valentino will be here on Edison Day. The automobile (at left), a 1927 Isotta-Fraschini Tipo 8A S Roadster, will serve as a preview of the first Edison *Concours d'Elegance*, which will be held in October 2015 on the Glenmont grounds. This spectacular event will showcase the best examples of classic cars from around the world. The Edison *Concours d'Elegance* Foundation LLC, The National Park Service, and The Edison Innovation Foundation are working closely to create a world-class series of events, including a parade of classic automobiles through West Orange, tours of the Glenmont estate and Thomas Edison's Laboratory, and a fabulous gala event. The highlight of the *Concours*, which will be open to the public, will be the display of over 80 classic and exotic automobiles. The vehicles will be judged and awarded trophies for their excellence by a team of respected experts.

The Edison *Concours* is an opportunity to enjoy the beauty of classic cars and Llewellyn Park and, at the same time, to explore and connect with some of our nation's history of innovation and allow all to learn about our rich automotive heritage. The planners of this event are working with sponsors, volunteers, and West Orange Township to produce the event, which will benefit three very worthy non-profit organizations: The Edison Innovation Foundation, The Llewellyn Park Preservation Foundation, and The West Orange Scholarship Fund.

A photographer snaps a pair of prize-winning cars, a 1931 Duesenberg Derham Tourster and a 1934 Packard Custom Convertible Victoria, to publicize the *Concours d'Elegance* that will take place at Glenmont in 2015.



The 33rd Black Maria Film and Video Festival will stop on its tour for a showing on Edison Day at 4:30pm. Five prize-winning animated films will be shown; they hail from the United States, Germany, and Australia.

*Sleight of Hand* is a stop-motion animated film about illusions. A man yearns to know his place in the world and how he fits in, when sometimes it's better not to know.

In *Wise Choice or Lucky Guess*, a just-deceased man has to choose between heaven and hell, while riding an escalator.

*Salmon Deadly Sins* is a flipbook style film, each frame created individually by hand on a 3x5 index card, illustrating the seven deadly sins and a range of disparate associations of the artist's imagination.

In *Sidewalk* a woman walks through life, but her real journey is deep within as she confronts her changing body and learns to love herself.

*Virtuous Virtuall*, inspired by the overture to the opera *The Alchemist* by Louis Spohr, combines music and hand-crafted ink drawings in an exploration of a variety of moods.



## Field Trip Planned to Edison's Ore Milling Operation

Join the National Park Service and Dr. Paul Israel of the Thomas A. Edison Papers for a day trip to explore the mines of Ogdensburg, New Jersey. The Sterling Hill Mining Museum will host our tour of the museum and the Sterling Hill zinc mine, followed by a light hike (and a short drive) to the Edison mining complex on Sparta Mountain.



Reservations are required and space is limited. For more information or to make a reservation, please call 973-736-0550 extension 31 or email [michelle\\_ortwein@nps.gov](mailto:michelle_ortwein@nps.gov) by May 3rd.

Edison and his Ogdensburg crew, ca. 1895.





National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Thomas Edison National Historical Park  
211 Main Street  
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## Happy St. Patrick's Day

*Top:* Superintendent Tom Ross snaps a salute as he passes the Main Street Gate during the 2014 West Orange St. Patrick's Day parade. His family fills the back seat of the Ford Model T, and Sound Recording curator Jerry Fabris is at the wheel.

*Bottom:* Ranger Greg Washburne steps out from the sidewalk to greet Superintendent Ross.

After the parade, Protection staff escorted the Model T safely back to Glenmont.



### EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

#### **Volunteers-In-Parks Coordinator Thomas Edison National Historical Park**

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